

ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES GROWING PAINS---



In a high growth county such as Columbia County, there is always the question of how do we control growth, or do we let growth control us? We are currently faced with many requests to add neighborhoods near existing neighborhoods and almost everyone has an opinion. Residents that live in areas with large lots, resent higher density growth. Residents with a few delays in traffic, resent new residents that add traffic. Residents with children in our schools, resent new students that add to classroom size. Many residents feel that they should have a say in what is built near their property. Some even have the mindset of "since I am here and happy, let's close the doors". On the other side, owners of vacant properties feel that they should have the right to do whatever is most profitable to them. "If other properties have been developed, why can't I develop mine"? Developers feel that they have built this county and have played a big role in our success, so they must be allowed to continue to develop. People who wish to relocate to Columbia County feel that they should have the same opportunities for housing that current owners have had. Most have valid points. All of the above is the reason that most counties have zoning regulations. These are a set of rules that hopefully will protect the rights of current property owners, allow builders to build, and allow all, current and new, to enjoy the benefits of living in Columbia County. Before we go any further, a review of the zoning and rezoning process might be helpful:

1. A property owner desires to do something with their vacant property that is not allowed under the present zoning. They, or their representative who might be a real estate agent, an architect/engineer, a developer, a contractor, etc., comes to the county Planning and Zoning office and fills out a request to rezone their property for a specific use. Speculative rezoning is allowed only under a very unusual circumstance. The staff begins their review according to very detailed guidelines, compatibility with surrounding properties, compliance with the Growth Management Plan, availability of utilities, impact on traffic and schools, etc. All major areas of county staff are asked to comment including the school board, the sheriff's office, traffic control, water and sewer utility, and others. A sign is placed on the property for thirty days

showing the rezoning request and the time and place of a public hearing to discuss this request before the Planning and Zoning Committee. The Committee consists of five members, each selected by a member of the Board of Commissioners with their chair and vice-chair being selected from within.

2. Once the thirty-day review process is complete, the request is placed on the P & Z agenda. The committee meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 6:00 pm in the commission room in Building A. The county staff makes the presentation with their recommendations to the committee and the committee chair will open the "Public Hearing" to allow any and all interested parties to offer their opinion concerning approval or disapproval. The committee chairman will then close the public hearing after all have been heard. The committee will discuss the request in depth and take a vote to recommend approval, disapproval, or return to staff for more information. Remember that the P & Z Committee is only a recommending body. The final decision rests with the elected officials, the Board of Commissioners.

3. Approximately two weeks after the P & Z Committee make their recommendation the item will be placed on the Board of Commissioners agenda. At that meeting, the commissioners will decide if they agree or disagree with the planning board decision or if they would like to delay and seek more information. The commission has the complete staff and P & Z Committee information available for their individual review several days prior to their meeting. Usually presentations are made from the applicant and also from the public as to support or disagree with the planning committee decision. Prior to the final vote, the commission has their discussions and in many cases, advice from the county attorney as to the legality of any decision and its ability to withstand any legal challenge. In all cases, the applicant and adjacent property owners have certain legal rights. Having said all of the above, most rezoning requests are made without an issue. However, as we have grown and property has become more expensive, developers are looking for higher density housing in areas

Continued on next page...

GROWING PAINS (continued from page 1)

of the county that have previously been lower density, but have available land. We faced this several years ago with the surge of apartment rezoning requests. That was handled by a brief moratorium and then a limitation on new apartment rezoning to fifty per year. We have the same limitation on townhouses at sixty rezoning requests per year. Recently, we have encountered many requests for higher density single-family units. Those that specialize in this market say this is "affordable housing" and is much needed in Columbia County. However, having seen some of these developments being completed, the commission directed the staff to formulate new zoning guidelines that require more space between houses, greater setbacks for the streets, and larger lot sizes. We are also requiring sidewalks, greenspace, and streetlights in new developments. This change brought many protests from the building and development community, but was passed and has been in effect for several months. The completion of the ten-year state requires updates to the "Growth Management Plan" and will also probably initiate other zoning regulations. The public hearings on this update have given us a lot of information as to the type of county our citizens would like to see and maintain.

Rezoning issues are the toughest tasks before the county commission. None are taken lightly because of the many facets and possible future consequences. We realize that no property owner wants their property possibly devalued by adjacent property development, but we also realize that many have the "not in my backyard attitude". We realize that the farmers owning hundreds of acres complained when housing came in that only occupied four or five acres. Also that R-1, 30,000 sq. ft. lot owners do not like ten and fifteen thousand sq. ft. lots nearby. However, a truly successful county has housing availability for all. The most difficult concept is the one that was mentioned earlier; "since I am here and happy, let's close the doors". This is not a fair or reasonable approach. But there are valid concerns about growth and

many of those are expressed in rezoning discussions; the plans for infrastructure improvements, the impact on schools, protection of the environment, and many others. Hopefully these are addressed by the planning staff, the planning committee, and the commission. Ironically, no one seems to leave a rezoning decision happy. If the applicant is successful, they complain about the conditions imposed by the county. If the applicant is denied, they complain of unfairness in the process. If the opposition is unsuccessful, they complain that the commission did not listen or was bought off by the developer or is just plain stupid. Only the latter is possibly true.

Zoning regulations are very complex, involved and are applied as fairly as possible. Each request is viewed on its own merits with fairness to both parties paramount. The commission has taken steps to improve the quality of residential and commercial construction and will most likely take additional steps in the future. Our quality of life is too good to be threatened by less than desirable growth. Remember, the public is allowed to express their opinions at each step of the rezoning process and we will listen. Please take advantage of that with any issue that you feel could affect you.

The planning staff, the Planning and Zoning Committee, and the Board of Commissioners make a very determined effort to be fair to all parties in zoning and rezoning issues. The total welfare of the county is of primary concern and I think that is a common goal of all citizens. Sustainability of our communities is very important to all of us. Columbia County will continue to grow and fortunately, we have funding available to handle most of the problems associated with growth thanks to the programs approved by our voters. By continuing to work together we can assure that our great community continues to grow and high standards are met.

YUCHIKIOKEE

YuchiKiokee Festival March 17, 18 & 19, 2016 at Evans Towne Center Park.
The three-day all ages festival celebrates Columbia County's art, music, dance and heritage.



BUILDING AWARENESS

Columbia County Sheriff's Office Citizens Law Enforcement Academy

The academy is open to all Columbia County residents age 18 or older. Students meet once a week from 6:30 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. for ten weeks. The academy allows citizens to get an inside look at the operations of their Sheriff's Office, Detention Center, and 911 Center. The curriculum includes demonstrations by the Special Response Team (SRT), Crime Suppression Unit K-9's, and motorcycle and bicycle officers, as well as presentations

by Special Operations Division deputies specializing in vice & narcotics, and traffic enforcement. Students receive firearms safety and marksmanship training with the .40 caliber handgun, the same weapon issued to CCSO uniformed deputies. The next class begins March 3, 2016 and ends May 12, 2016. For more information please contact Lieutenant Patricia Champion at (706) 541-3970.

FEBRUARY LIBRARY EVENTS

Date	Time	Program	Age	Additional Info	Branch
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays	10:15 AM	Toddler Time	Children	Toddler Time is for children 2-3 years old. No registration required.	Evans
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays	11:00 AM	Preschool Time	Children	Preschool Time is for children 3-5 years old. No registration required.	Evans
Mondays beginning February 1	10:00 AM-2:00 PM	AARP Tax Help	Adults	AARP volunteers provide free assistance with your taxes on a first-come, first-served basis.	Euchee Creek
Tuesdays	10:15 & 11:00 AM	Baby & Me	Children	Calling all babies! Bring your littlest ones to this class made just for them!	Evans
Tuesdays	10:30 AM or 6:00 PM	ESL Classes	Adults	Free English Language classes are now offered at the Evans Branch.	Evans
Tuesdays	10:30 AM	Child Enrichment	All ages children	Join us for stories, songs, dancing and the coolest crafts around. No registration required.	Harlem
Tuesdays	10:30 AM	Baby & Me	Children	Baby & Me Class is for children under 2 years old. No registration required.	Euchee Creek
Tuesdays	4:15 PM	Child Enrichment	Children	Join us for stories, songs, dancing and the coolest crafts around. No registration required.	Euchee Creek
Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays beginning February 2	10:00 AM-2:00 PM	AARP Tax Help	Adults	AARP volunteers provide free assistance with your taxes on a first-come, first-served basis.	Evans
Wednesdays	10:30 AM	Child Enrichment	Children	Join us for stories, songs, dancing and the coolest crafts around. No registration required.	Euchee Creek
Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning	4:30 PM	Afternoon Adventures	Children	Afternoon adventures is for all ages of children. Stories, songs, dancing and the coolest crafts around. No registration required.	Evans
January 29 and February 5, 2016	10:00 AM-3:30 PM	Computer Boot Camp	Adults	New to computers? Perplexed by technology? This two-part class will get you started on the right foot. Registration is required.	Evans
February 1, 2016	4:00 PM	Maker Space	Teens	Teens will have the opportunity to work on their own projects under staff guidance while using library equipment including CAD software, development software, a 3D scanner, a 3D printer, soldering equipment, and general electronics tools. Those interested may participate in library sponsored projects with materials and assistance provided by library staff.	Evans
February 1, 2016	5:30 PM	Super Novas Club	Children	Join us for weather experiment science adventures for 2nd - 4th grades.	Euchee Creek
February 1, 2016	5:30 PM	YA Craft Night	Teens	Join us for an exploding box craft? Intrigued? You'd better be there to find out more!	Euchee Creek

All programs are subject to change. Visit www.gchrl.org or call 706-863-1946 (Evans branch), 706-556-0594 (Euchee Creek branch), or 706-556-9795 (Harlem branch).

VISIT US TODAY! www.ColumbiaCountyGa.gov

FEBRUARY LIBRARY EVENTS

Date	Time	Program	Age	Additional Info	Branch
February 4, 2016	4:00 PM	Culture Club	Teens	Registration not required. Ages 14-19, meet to learn about, discuss and experience various cultures.	Evans
February 6 and 20, 2016	12:00 PM	Saturday Chess Club	All Patrons	Saturday Chess Club has no age limits and registration is required.	Euchee Creek
February 8, 2016	5:30 PM	Family Movie Night	All Ages	Family movie and family fun for the whole family. Light refreshments served. No registration required.	Euchee Creek
February 8, 2016	7:00 PM	Pub Fiction Book Club	Adults	Join us for a new kind of book club. The February selection is <i>Furiously Happy</i> by Jenny Lawson.	Pizza Central, Evans
February 11, 2016	1:00 PM	Columbia County Genealogical Society	Adults	Whether you're an expert or just beginning to look into your roots, this club has something to offer everyone.	Euchee Creek
February 11, 2016	6:00 PM	Money Management	Adults	Learn the ins-and-outs of managing your money. Call 706-863-1946 ext 4 for details and registration.	Evans
February 12, 2016	6:00 PM	2nd Annual Family Forts Night	Children	"Join us again for a night of fort building! Bring some blankets, flashlights, pillows, and an eagerness to read and play, and we'll provide the rest - including fun game booths, interactive stories, s'mores snacks, and more! Recommended for all ages of children!"	Evans
February 12, 2015	11:30 AM	Elmcroft Senior Studies 101 Lunch and Learn	Adults	Join us for a different senior studies topic each month. Call 706-863-1946 ext. 4 for details and registration.	Evans
February 12, 2015	3:00 PM	Genealogy Club	Adults	Join us to learn the basics of finding your roots. Registration required by calling 706-863-1946 ext 4.	Evans
February 13, 2016	10:00 AM	Keep Calm and Coupon On	Adults	Get couponing tips and swap coupons. Registration is required.	Euchee Creek
February 15, 2016	4:00 PM	Maker Space	Teens	Teens will have the opportunity to work on their own projects under staff guidance while using library equipment including CAD software, development software, a 3D scanner, a 3D printer, soldering equipment, and general electronics tools. Those interested may participate in library sponsored projects with materials and assistance provided by library staff.	Evans
February 15, 2016	6:30 PM	Monday Night Book Discussion	Adults	The February selection is <i>Letters from Skye</i> by Jessie Brockmore.	Evans
February 17, 2016	2:00 PM	Bibliobop Dance Party	Children	Have fun with dance and creative movement at the library! There will be scarves, instruments, a parachute and more, along with ample opportunities for motor skill development and caregiver-child interaction. Recommended for ages 2-5 years.	Evans
February 18, 2015	11:00 AM	Adult Time-Out (The Basics: Memory Loss, Dementia and Alzheimer's)	Adults	This Program provides information on detection, causes and risk factors, stages of Alzheimer's Disease, treatment, and related dementias.	Euchee Creek
February 18, 2016	11:30 AM	Brown Bag Book Discussion	Adults	The February selection is <i>The 100 Year Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared</i> by Jonas Jonasson.	
February 18, 2016	6:00 PM	Retirement Plans for Business Owners	Adults	Are you a business owner? Are you planning on opening your own business? Learn how to secure your retirement in this class. Call 706-863-1946 for details and registration.	Evans
February 19, 2016	11:00 AM	STEM (Math Game Day)	Children	Join us for math games for grades 1-4.	Euchee Creek
February 19, 2016	11:30 AM	Alzheimer's Association: Know the 10 Signs of Alzheimer's Disease	Adults	Learn the signs of Alzheimer's disease. Registration required.	Evans
February 20, 2016	10:00 AM-2:00 PM	Local Author Event	All Ages	Meet your new favorite author at this special event!	Evans
February 22 & 29 and March 7, 2016	5:30 PM	Camera 1, 2, and 3	Adults	Get to know your camera in this three-part class. Registration required.	Evans
February 22, 2016	5:30 PM	YA Game Night	Teens	Join us for fun, games, and light refreshments.	Euchee Creek
February 25, 2016	10:30 AM	On the Same Page Book Club	Adults	The February selection is <i>The Boys in the Boat</i> by Daniel James Brown.	Euchee Creek
February 25, 2016	5:30 PM	Google School	Adults	Is your mind boggled by Google? Join us for this informative class. Registration is required.	Evans
February 25, 2016	6:00 PM	Long-Term Care and Estate Planning	Adults	Learn to plan for care in your later years. Call 706-863-1946 ext 4 for details and registration.	Evans
February 26, 2016	11:00 AM	STEM Class, Gold Bug	Children	Learn about science, technology, engineering, and math in this fun program for ages 9-14.	Evans

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MARCH LIBRARY EVENTS

Date	Time	Program	Age	Additional Info	Branch
March 2, 2016	11:00 AM	Stories & Crafts with Morris Museum	Children	Our friends from the Morris Museum will be here to share stories and crafts!	Evans
March 4, 2016	10:00 AM	Genealogy 101	Adults	Whether you're an expert or just beginning to look into your roots, this class has something to offer everyone.	Evans
March, 5 & 19, 2016	12:00 PM	Saturday Chess Club	All Patrons	Saturday Chess Club has no age limits and registration required.	Euchee Creek
March 7 & 21, 2016	4:00 PM	Maker Space	Teens	Teens will have the opportunity to work on their own projects under staff guidance while using library equipment including CAD software, development software, a 3D scanner, a 3D printer, soldering equipment, and general electronics tools. Those interested may participate in library sponsored projects with materials and assistance provided by library staff.	Evans
March 7, 2016	5:30 PM	Super Novas Club	Children	Water Filtration Experiments- experiment with cool water works so come prepared to have fun with water.	Euchee Creek
March 7, 2016	5:30 PM	YA Craft Night	Teens	Teens, join us for a fun Silhouette Wall Art class!	Euchee Creek
March 9 & 16, 2016	10:00 AM-3:30 PM	Computer Boot Camp	Adult	New to computers? Perplexed by technology? This two-part class will get you started on the right foot. Registration is required.	Evans
March 10, 2016	1:00 PM	Columbia County Genealogical Society	Adults	Genealogy Club- all ages no registration required.	Euchee Creek
March 10, 2016	3:00 PM-6:00 PM	Gadget Help with Alex	Adults	Did you get a phone, tablet, or other piece of technology? Need assistance figuring it out? Drop in and get help with your newest gadgets.	Evans
March 10, 2016	6:00 PM	College Funding	Adults	This class will cover options for paying for college. Call 706-863-1946 ext 4 for details and registration.	Evans
March 11, 2016	11:30 AM	Elmcroft Senior Studies 101 Lunch and Learn	Adults	Join us for a different senior studies topic each month. Call 706-863-1946 ext. 4 for details and registration.	Evans
March 11, 2016	3:00 PM	Genealogy Club	Adults	Join us to learn the basics of finding your roots. Registration required by calling 706-863-1946 ext 4.	Evans
March 12, 2016	10:00 AM	Keep Calm and Coupon On	Adults	Keep Calm and Coupon On- Registration Required.	Euchee Creek
March 14, 2016	10:00 AM	Email 101	Adults	Learn the basics of email. Call 706-863-1946 ext 4 for details and registration.	Evans
March 14, 2016	1:30 PM	Excel 101	Adults	Learn the basics of Microsoft Excel. Call 706-863-1946 ext 4 for details and registration.	Evans
March 14, 2016	7:00 PM	Pub Fiction Book Club	Adults	Join us for a new kind of book club. The March selection is <i>The Devil in the White City</i> by Erik Larson.	Pizza Central, Evans
March 14, 2016	5:30 PM	Family Movie Night	All Ages	Family movie and family fun for the whole family, light refreshments served, no registration required	Euchee Creek
March 16, 2016	2:00 PM	Chalk It Up!	Children	We're chalking it up with sidewalk stories! Recommended age: 2-5. Meet in the children's classroom.	Evans
March 16, 2016	4:00 PM	Genealogy Class	Adults	Whether you're an expert or just beginning to look into your roots, this class has something to offer everyone.	Harlem
March 17, 2016	11:00AM	Adult Time-Out (The Basics: (Know the 10 warning signs of Alzheimer's Disease)	Adults	The purpose of this workshop is to provide the general public with a greater understanding of age-related memory loss and dementia and what to do if they have the signs of Alzheimer's.	Euchee Creek
March 17, 2016	11:30 AM	Brown Bag Book Discussion	Adults	The March selection is <i>The Day the World Came to Town</i> by Jim DeFede.	Evans
March 17, 2016	4:00 PM	Harlem Book Club	Adults	The March selection is <i>Prodigal Summer</i> by Barbara Kingsolver.	Harlem
March 17, 2016	6:00 PM	Surviving Market Swings	Adults	Learn to plan for fluxuations in economic markets. Call 706-863-1946 ext 4 for details and registration.	Evans
March 21, 2016	5:30 PM	Starry Night Story Time	Adult	Come and receive assistance with your income taxes. No registration required	Euchee Creek
March 21, 2016	6:30 PM	Monday Night Book Discussion	Adult	The March selection is <i>A God in Ruins</i> by Kate Atkinson.	Evans
March 24, 2016	10:30 AM	On the Same Page Book Club	Adults	Adult Book Club - <i>White Fire</i> by Preston & Child	Euchee Creek
March 24, 2016	5:00 PM	Family Movie Night	All Ages	Join us for a movie for the whole family. Movie selection TBA.	Harlem
March 25, 2016	11:00 AM	STEM Class	Children	Learn about NSA careers. Grades 9-12 welcome.	Euchee Creek
March 31, 2016	6:00 PM	Long-Term Care and Estate Planning	Adults	Learn to plan for care in your later years. Call 706-863-1946 ext 4 for details and registration.	Evans

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UPCOMING CONCERTS



PRISM SAXAPHONE QUARTET

SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

at the JABEZ S. HARDIN PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Intriguing programs of great beauty and breadth have distinguished the PRISM Saxophone Quartet as one of America's foremost chamber ensembles. Champions of new music, PRISM has commissioned over 200 works, many by internationally celebrated composers.

All tickets only \$21!

Columbia County Schedule of Meetings for February and March 2016

Board of Commissioners Meetings

Building A Auditorium, 630 Ronald Reagan Drive, Evans, GA

Tuesdays February 2nd and 16th

Tuesdays March 1st and 15th 6:00pm

Board of Commissioners Committee Meetings

Management & Internal Services and Development & Engineering

Services

Building A Auditorium, 630 Ronald Reagan Drive, Evans, GA Tuesday, February 9th, 8:30am

Public Works Services and Community and Emergency Services

Columbia County Courthouse, Appling, GA

Tuesday, February 23rd, 8:30am

Management & Internal Services and Development & Engineering Services

Building A Auditorium, 630 Ronald Reagan Drive, Evans, GA

Tuesday, March 8th, 8:30am

Public Works Services and Community and Emergency Services

Building A Auditorium, 630 Ronald Reagan Drive, Evans, GA

Tuesday, March 22nd, 8:30am

Columbia County Planning Commission Meetings

Building A Auditorium, 630 Ronald Reagan Drive, Evans, GA

Thursdays February 4th and 18th

Thursdays March 3rd and 17th 6:00pm

Columbia County Development Advisory Board

Building A Auditorium, 630 Ronald Reagan Drive, Evans, GA

Monday, March 14th, 4:00pm

NOTICE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE TAX COMMISSIONER:

There has been a change in the due date for personal property mobile home tax bills for 2016. The due date for this year and from now on is **April 1st**. Penalty and interest begin to accrue the day after. Also you are subject to be sent to Magistrate Court for non-display of a current year decal if taxes are not paid on time.

All taxes for personal and real property that were due November 15, 2015 are now delinquent. All delinquent accounts are now subject to additional interest, penalty and filing of a tax lien if not **paid in full by February 15th**. Tax payments must be received in the office no later than 5pm on the 15th to avoid the additional charges.

Method of payments can be made by check, cash, money order or credit card.

Homestead Exemption Applications are now being accepted at the Evans Campus location only. To receive benefit of the exemption for 2016, application must be made by **April 1st**. Please call our office if you have any questions. Our number is 706-261-8299.

Tax Commissioner Office hours and locations are as follows: (Drop boxes are also available)

Evans Campus: 630 Ronald Reagan DR Bldg. C Evans 8am-5pm Monday thru Friday (Thru 2/29/16)

Grovetown Campus: 101 W. Robinson AVE Grovetown 8am-4:30pm Monday thru Friday

NOTICE – Effective March 1, 2016

Tax Commissioner Office hours will change to Monday – Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm (excluding holidays). This includes both the Evans and Grovetown Offices.

7TH ANNUAL COLUMBIA COUNTY CHARITY GALA
FEBRUARY 27, 2016 COLUMBIA COUNTY EXHIBITION CENTER

COLUMBIA COUNTY'S PREMIERE BLACK TIE EVENT BENEFITING:

- COLUMBIA COUNTY CARES FOOD PANTRY
- YOUTH LEADERSHIP
- FORWARD FOUNDATION

\$80 SINGLE ♥ \$150 COUPLE
◆ BLACK TIE ◆
706.868.3484

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT EVENTBRITE.COM FACEBOOK: COLUMBIA COUNTY CHARITY GALA

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COLUMBIA COUNTY'S ANNUAL

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PRESENTED BY **HCCU**
 Your Health & Education Credit Union

SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2016
 EVANS TOWNE CENTER PARK

FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY! CHECK BACK SOON FOR MORE DETAILS!